

SUNSHINE E-NEWSLETTER

Valentine's Day Edition



February 2026 Issue NO 8

Team Florida

Building Bridges for Veterans



FROM THE DESK OF THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT



Greetings,

Now that we begin the month of February, the time we spend honoring our veterans continues to show our unwavering support and gratitude, which we must express every day to the men and women who have donned the uniform for the freedoms we enjoy. As we travel through this month, let's honor our veterans by showing up—through volunteering, listening, and lending a hand. Small acts of support make a lasting difference for those who've given so much. While you may think it goes unnoticed, all the support we offer is returned with gratitude from those who have been there for all of us.

February is a time to reflect, reconnect, and serve. Volunteering with veterans gives us the chance to honor their sacrifices by standing beside them today—offering support, respect, and hope. Together, we can turn gratitude into meaningful action.

So please make sure that our veterans understand that they are our valentines, as we continue to increase our membership to help in Building Bridges for Our Veterans by showing communities how we are continuing our efforts in Bridging the Gap for Our Veterans through the programs we support.

Michael Yates
President

"Be the Lighthouse in Somebody's Storm"
Don't forget to give your Veteran their Valentine's Day card !!!



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

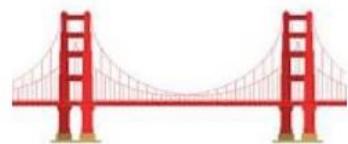
**Dept. Commander & President
Joint Homecoming**

March 13 - 14, 2026

Florida Hotel - Room rates \$139



**1500 Sand Lake Rd.
Orlando, Fl.**



Phone: 800-588-4656

(Must mention VFW Homecoming)

Hotel Reservations Cut-off

February 16, 2026

Reservations for Banquet on March 14, 2026

Must be sent to Debbie Tilley

904-460-9345 or cell 904-495-3622

dktilley@comcast.net

cut-off February 27, 2026

Scouts and Veterans Unite at VFW Post 7721 Kickoff Breakfast

VFW Post 7721 kicked off the year with a Sunday breakfast on 1/4/25, where Arrow of Light Award scouts volunteered to serve and meet Veterans. Many Veterans, former scouts themselves, shared their experiences. The post continues to support Scout Troop 7721



VALENTINE WEEKEND MID -WINTER CONFERENCE

*Florida Hotel & Conference Center
1500 Sand Lake Road, Orlando, Florida 32809*

February 12-15. 2026

Phone: 407-859-1500

Room Rate: \$145 .00 plus tax

(Mention Veterans of Foreign Wars Mid-Winter Meeting)

Complimentary Self-Parking

CUT OFF DATE - Wednesday - January 21, 2026

Friday- February 13, 2026

8:30 AM - 10 AM Floor Practice & Officers March

10:00 AM: Dept. Chairmen's Meeting (*closed meeting*)

10:45-12:00 PM: District Presidents Meeting (*closed meeting*)

Blue Auxiliary Shirt/Black Pants/Black Skirt

1:00 PM: Council Meeting and

Opening Ceremonies Mid-Winter Conference

Saturday, February 14, 2026

Blue Auxiliary Shirt/Black Pants/Black Skirt

8:00AM JOINT OPENING

9:30 - 1:00 PM

Mid-Winter Conference

Saturday Evening

*Celebration of Achievement Banquet Tickets only available from
Department VFW Headquarters More Information to Follow
Dressy - Semi-Formal*

NOTE: THIS IS A TENTATIVE AGENDA – ALL TIMES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

VFW Post 4250 Spreads Holiday Magic

VFW Post 4250 Auxiliary collected toys and decorated jeeps and a trailer to bring Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their favorite elf to children in the community. Driving through the streets announcing Santa's arrival brought kids and adults out to visit! Each child received holiday snacks, candy canes, and small gifts—and even the dogs got treats. Amazingly, snow flurries appeared during Santa's visit! It was a fun-filled day for all.



Adopt A Veteran

Veterans Village Resident Name: _____

Room # _____

Date/Month of birth _____

Adopting Auxiliary _____

This program is to give extra attention to those residents at Veterans Village. Please DO NOT send them money, instead - send cards on the Holidays, remember them on their Birthday & at Christmas with a special gift.

Contact Kelly Barr for information on who you can Adopt:

719-963-3370

VFW Auxiliary 7909 Honors Heroes, Remembers History, and Spreads Holiday Cheer

Jacksonville, FL — December 2025 was a month of service and giving for VFW Auxiliary 7909.

On December 13, members supported Wreaths Across America at Jacksonville National Cemetery, where a beautiful ceremony and flyover honored fallen heroes. One of our newest members, Colleen Strong, served as a section leader.

On December 7, they attended and sponsored a table at the Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Ceremony, featuring a moving presentation of colors by the Black Creek Young Marines.

To close the month, they spread Christmas cheer at Oak View Nursing Home, delivering homemade stockings filled with gifts, cozy throws, and stuffed animals to residents.

From honoring veterans to uplifting our community, December was a powerful reminder of our mission.





Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary

Department of Florida Auxiliaries

Appreciation Gift for Department President Michael Yates

Dear Auxiliary Members,

To show our appreciation to Department President **Michael Yates** for his outstanding leadership and dedication during this “**Building Bridges for Our Veterans**” year of 2025–2026, the Department of Florida Auxiliaries will present him with a special **Appreciation Gift** at the upcoming **2026 Department Convention**.

This presentation will take place during the Auxiliary’s business session on **Saturday**, immediately following Department President Mike’s Report to the membership.

We invite your Auxiliary to join us in honoring his efforts by contributing to this gift. If your Auxiliary would like to participate, please:

- Make your check payable to **Leona McDermott**
- Mail your check along with the completed contribution form to the address listed below
- Ensure that your contribution is received **no later than April 30, 2026**

Your support will help us express our collective gratitude for President Yates’ commitment to our mission and his tireless work on behalf of our veterans.

With appreciation,

Leona McDermott, Chief of Staff
Department of Florida VFW Auxiliary

DEADLINE: April 30, 2026

DETACH AND RETURN THIS FORM TO: Leona McDermott
4444 Royal Fern Way
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

Enclosed is the appreciation gift from Auxiliary _____ in the amount of

\$ _____ 2025-2026 Department President Michael Yates.

Name: _____ Auxiliary Title: _____

Address:

Honoring Our Heroes: Greater Beaches Post & Auxiliary 3270 Veteran Pinning Ceremonies

Greater Beaches Post 3270 Auxiliary member Gina Perrone and her husband, the Post Chaplain and a Vietnam Veteran, volunteer with Community Hospice & Palliative Care to honor Veterans through pinning ceremonies. Each Veteran receives an American Flag, commemorative pin, certificate of appreciation, and "Mail Call" letters from local students. The Chaplain leads the Pledge, Veteran's Prayer, and Final Salute.

Recent ceremonies were deeply moving:

- One Vet tearfully said, "I thought you forgot about us."
- Another, whose son requested the ceremony, composed the #1 military song used in 600+ locations.
- A third was cared for by a neighbor for two years, and another streamed the ceremony for family nationwide.

These moments remind us how much these honors mean. We will never forget our Veterans.



From the Desk of the Program Chairman

Did you know you can look at last year's reporting on the Dashboard to see how your Auxiliary did their reporting? This could be a great training tool for new members who want to learn how to write a report.

Simply go to the Dashboard, change the upper left corner to read Auxiliary , put your Aux number in and select 2025 instead of 2026. Remember: To make the Circle of Champions you MUST be reported in Americanism, Hospital, Legislative and Veterans & Family.

Happy Reporting
Debbie Tilley

VFW Auxiliary 4206 Serves Veterans at Viera VA with Burgers, Hot Dogs, and Gratitude

The VFW Auxiliary 4206 is proud to continue its tradition of honoring veterans by hosting a snack table and serving hamburgers and hot dogs at the Viera VA. This marks the second year of the event, which aims to provide comfort and appreciation to those who have served our country. Organizers hope to make this an annual tradition for many years to come, strengthening the bond between the community and its veterans.



4th of July
Snack Table & Picnic

Viera VA
2900 Veterans Way, Melbourne, FL 32940
Thursday, July 2nd
8am & 10am

VFW Auxiliary 4206 will be providing a Snack Table & then serve Hamburger or Hot Dog meals to the Veterans and chat with them.

If you're able to attend, we'd appreciate the help and I'm sure the Veterans would enjoy the company.

We hope to see you there!

If you'd like to help support this event with a monetary donation we would very much appreciate that.

You may do so via check, made payable to:
VFW Auxiliary 4206 mailed to; 3201 Dairy Rd. Melbourne, FL 32904
or
via our Zeffy at: <https://bit.ly/HelpUsHelpVeterans>

For more information please see our event at:
<https://bit.ly/July4thSnackTableAndPicnic>

4TH OF JULY SNACK TABLE & PICNIC

HELP US HELP VETERANS

**Share Your
Stories, Share your
Light - Sunshine E
Newsletter Fall
Conference Video**



Local 10-Year-Old Donates Hygiene Kits to Help Those in Need

At the January meeting of VFW Post #4250 Auxiliary, members were honored to recognize a remarkable act of kindness from a young community member. A 10-year-old boy, eager to help others, assembled individual bags filled with personal hygiene items such as soap, lotion, and shampoo.

His family reached out to ensure these thoughtful care packages would reach people in need, and the Auxiliary gladly accepted the responsibility. During the meeting, the young man personally delivered the bags, and in appreciation for his generosity, the Auxiliary presented him with a **Helping Hands Certificate** and heartfelt thanks.



Monthly Program Focus: Youth

Patriotism Through Literacy

Patriotism Through Literacy is a VFW Auxiliary Youth Activities initiative started in 2019, the purpose of which is to foster a love of reading while teaching students about

America's past primarily through historical fiction and creative non-fiction, promoting both patriotism *and* literacy, in addition to encouraging empathy and broadening perspectives. The intended age range of readers/listeners of the books below spans from pre-k through grade 12.

Introduces youth to historical figures and teaches them about events in our nation's history while fostering a love of reading that can lead to a lifetime of learning.

Recommended Books



Recognizes Random Acts of Patriotism (R.A.P.)

We encourage and reward patriotism through R.A.P.! If a child is seen thanking a Veteran, properly placing their hand on their heart during the Pledge of Allegiance or involved in some other activity that promotes Patriotism, we suggest giving them a R.A.P. card. It's a fun and unique way to engage children elementary age and younger!

Print R.A.P. Cards - You could attach the card to an American Flag pen, a Patriotic pencil, or a piece of red, white, and blue candy.

Give cards out at the Library, Church, Festivals, Restaurants, Grocery Stores, or during youth sporting events. (school teams or local club teams: Football, Basketball, Soccer).

Give cards to children that Thank a Veteran for their service, stands for the Pledge with hand over their heart, and/or stands for the National Anthem. (Mission BBQ plays the National Anthem daily at Noon, Children stand and place their littles hands over their heart, R.A.P. card moment!)



Lanaie Reed
Auxiliary Youth Chair Dept
of FL 2025-2026

lanwileth@gmail.com

The Illustrating America Art Contest encourages students in grades K through 8 to explore their artistic talents by creating original artwork that reflects patriotic themes. This national competition helps young artists gain confidence and recognition while allowing them to express their love of country creatively. We should all be excited to see the world through the eyes of our youth! To download and print the **Illustrating America Art Entry Contest**:

- Go to MALTA (<https://malta.vfwauxiliary.org>) and log in with your username/password.
- Once logged in, click on “**Member Resources**” on the *top* menu, then “**Youth Activities**” on the *left side* menu.
- Click on the Illustrating America Art Contest Entry Form which is in the middle of the page under the “**Illustrating America Art Contest**” and save to your computer (it is editable)



Youth Dept of Florida

Department Officers 2025 – 2026

President

Michael Yates
1620 W. Evergreen Drive
Citrus Springs, FL 34434
(330) 233-2133
Brusdtwice1@gmail.com

Senior Vice President

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5867 111th Street
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(757) 685-1837
Kathy_wright@bellsouth.net

Junior Vice President

Margaret Rementer
22161 Olean Blvd
Port Charlotte, FL 33952
(941) 286-2688
Bashibee4@yahoo.com

Secretary

Debbie Tilley
22 Surfcrest St.
St. Augustine, FL 32080
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(904) 495-3622 (cell)
dktilley@comcast.net

Treasurer

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dflaux.treas@gmail.com

Chaplain

Jason Estell
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(352) 584-4960
Jason211983@gmail.com

Conductor

Pauline Riddle
451 E 3rd Street
Chuluota, FL 32766
(407) 682-2452
Fireballs44@hotmail.com

Guard

Robert "Bob" Kabala
1006 43rd Avenue N.
St. Petersburg, FL 33703
727-308-8508
rkabala@tampabay.rr.com

Chief of Staff

Leona McDermott
4444 Royal Fern Way
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
33410
(561) 386-6108
leemvfw@comcast.net

Know your Department Chairmen:

- Americanism – Michelle Butler American.patriotic.2526@gmail.com
- Auxiliary Outreach – Becky Kieffer bkiso2012@gmail.com
- Buddy Poppy / VFW National Home – Jennifer Holland Jenniferholland72@comcast.net
- Extension Revitalization & Mentoring – Sherri Golder sherrigolder@gmail.com
- Historian / Media Relations – Kathy Ingall shanily.05@gmail.com
- Hospital – Viki Stripling vikiplottsdistrict11@yahoo.com
- Legislative – Pamela Monroe Anamcarax2@icloud.com
- Membership & Mentoring – Holly Evans hadams1221@hotmail.com
- Scholarships – Carrie Messer messerca@gmail.com
- Dept. President's Special Project – Kelly Barr Flpresproject2526@gmail.com
- Veterans & Family Support – Ryan Harris ryan.harris.cisa@gmail.com
- Youth Program – Lanaie Reed lanwileth@gmail.com
- Program Advisor - Debbie Tilley dktilley@comcast.net

Keep up to date with the monthly promotions from your chairmen!

TAKE NOTE: "FOR ASSISTANCE LOGGING ON TO OUR REPORTING WEBSITE:

CONTACT DEBBIE TILLEY @ dktilley@comcast.net or call 904-460-9345

DO NOT USE THE CONTACT US BUTTON!"

Dates to Remember for 2025 – 2026

• <u>School of Instruction</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl</u>	<u>July 31 – August 3, 2025</u>
• <u>National Convention</u>	<u>Columbus, Ohio</u>	<u>August 9–14, 2025</u>
• <u>Department Fall Conference</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl</u>	<u>October 16 – 19, 2025</u>
• <u>Southern Conference</u>	<u>Montgomery, Texas</u>	<u>November 6 – 9, 2025</u>
• <u>National Mid-Year Conference</u>	<u>Cruise – Key West & Bahamas</u>	<u>February 9 – 13, 2026</u>
• <u>Department Mid-Winter Conference</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl</u>	<u>February 12 – 15, 2026</u>
• <u>C.A.F.E National Legislative Conference</u>	<u>Washington D.C.</u>	<u>February 28, 2026</u>
• <u>Dept Commander & Auxiliary Presidents Homecoming</u>	<u>Florida Hotel, Orlando Fl</u>	<u>March 2-4, 2026</u>
• <u>National Sr. Vice Conference</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>March 19-22, 2026</u>
• <u>National Presidents Visit (Fri – Mon)</u>	<u>Various</u>	<u>March 20-23, 2026</u>
• <u>Veterans Village Picnic</u>	<u>Fort McCoy, Florida</u>	<u>March 21, 2026</u>
• <u>Planning Meeting for Kathy Wright (May change)</u>		<u>April 4, 2026</u>
• <u>Department Judging</u>		<u>April 29-30, 2026</u>
• <u>National Jr. Vice Conference</u>	<u>TBD</u>	<u>May 14-18, 2026</u>
• <u>Department Convention</u>	<u>Renaissance Orlando, Fl</u>	<u>June 11-14, 2026</u>
• <u>National Convention</u>	<u>Reno, Nevada</u>	<u>July 24-30, 2026</u>



VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

MEMO

Date: December 15, 2025

To: Department Senior Vice Presidents
Department Secretaries
Department Treasurers

From: VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters

RE: 2026-2027 Program Year

When we moved the VFW Auxiliary Senior Vice Conference from January to March, it was agreed that National Headquarters would inform Departments of any Program or major Budget changes in December.

Here are the changes for the 2026-2027 year:

There will no longer be an Auxiliary Outreach program. However, there will still be eleven (11) programs because Buddy Poppy and National Home will be their own programs.

There will not be a Celebrating America's Freedom Event (CAFÉ). Therefore, no money will need to be budgeted for this.

We will put a stipend in National budget to help the Department Presidents attend the VFW Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. in March 2027.

Following the National Convention in Reno, the Department of Pennsylvania will have a Celebration for newly installed National President Donna Mills, on Thursday, July 30, 2026. The VFW Auxiliary National Council of Administration meeting will be that morning, July 30, 2026..

Illustrating America deadline dates will change: Student entry will be due to Auxiliaries December 15th; due to Departments January 15th; due to National Headquarters January 31st.



Scan the above QR code for the Sunshine E. Newsletter video presentation featuring photos of Auxiliaries from across the state.



Scan the above QR Code to submit stories & photos of your Auxiliary.